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FROM : AMLEGATION, HELSINKI, FINLAND
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON
REF : REVIEWED BY *EJH* DATE *3/20/52*
SUBJECT: PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED IN 252
DIMINISHING OF SOVIET PRESSURE ON FINLAND.

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The Legation believes that the evidence is sufficiently definite to say that there has been an easing of Soviet pressure on Finland.

The evidence takes various forms. In the first place, so far as the Legation is aware there have been no bullying notes sent by the Soviets to Finland for some months past. There has been a rather noticeable falling off in recent weeks of the old system of menacing the Finns by tossing alleged news items back and forth between the local Communist newspapers and Communist organs in Moscow. There has been greater personal cordiality of Russian officials toward the Finns. All sources indicate that the Soviet Minister, LEBEDEV, has been correct almost to the point of cordiality in his dealings with the Finns and has made none of the characteristic Soviet high pressure representations. He has been careful not to offend even those Finns who are rather notoriously not friendly to Soviet Russia (see LEG ESP 533, January 3, 1952). Members of the Russian Legation staff have also been more affable, even to the staff of this Legation, and some of them are studying Finnish.

The relative mildness of the Finnish Communists has also been noticeable in recent months. The Finnish Communist newspapers have tended to muffle their attacks on prominent non-Communist Finns and Finnish organizations, traditions, etc. They have been particularly mild in their comments regarding Kekkonen, even on the occasions when he has made sharp remarks about them, and they have not renewed the personal attacks on the President which were a disturbing item two years ago. There have been no political strikes such as those which were called in 1949, and although the Communists have tried to make political capital out of the sacrifices required in the execution of the stabilization program, they have not by any means taken all the advantage that they might of this program. They did not, for example, utilize the opportunity they had in the round wood taxes question in December to force a new election. The IXth Communist Party Congress in November 1951

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came out against exclusionism on the part of CP members and called for collaboration with all workers, peasants, and intellectuals who were sincere in their defense of the interests of the laboring masses.

The Legation's contacts seem generally of the opinion that a new trend has indeed been established, and that Soviet pressure on Finland at least for the moment has diminished. A typical comment was that [REDACTED] the Soviets had given Finland a longer tether, but that Finland must be circumspect before browsing in new pastures. **B-1**
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What explains this change in Soviet tactics?

It is of course conceivable that there has been no change, that the Legation and other observers have been deceived by appearances, or have interpreted the evidence badly. Nevertheless, as pointed out above, the evidence of a change seems too varied and weighty to accept this hypothesis although it is largely the absence of pinpricking, of pressure, of browbeating, rather than positive acts, which constitutes most of the evidence. It may also be that the trend is without real significance, but again it appears that there must be some purpose behind the cumulative evidence of a shift in Soviet tactics.

Assuming that there has indeed been some intentional change in Soviet tactics towards Finland, the following explanations may be offered: (1) that the Russians have discovered that the Finns are so sturdy and stubborn that browbeating doesn't pay, (2) that Russia's policy has been altered in order to promote a neutral northern bloc, (3) that Russian policy makers are today preoccupied with the German question and that they do not wish to stage any distractions which might hamper a solution of the German question acceptable to Russia, (4) that Russia is genuinely apprehensive of the growing strength of the United States and the other NATO powers, (5) that Russia's supreme policy objective is to get American forces out of Europe and that, knowing the high regard for Finland held in the United States, they think they might defeat their major purpose for minor advantages if they were to bully Finland.

With regard to point (1), there can be no doubt that any Communist menaces will in the foreseeable future be a red rag to the great majority of the people of Finland. The crisis in regard to internal Communism was in all probability passed in 1948. The non-Communist Finns, having driven the Communists from the positions of power they held and having roundly defeated them at the polls, are not likely in the future to be willing to surrender to them any real position of power. Although the political trend in Finland today is by no means clear, Communist gains in some sectors seem to be about offset by Communist losses in others. Thus against the Communist gains in the Diet elections in 1951, may be offset the Social Democratic gains in the SAK, where the Communists seem to

be losing ground, both in the organization and among the rank and file.

Against these factors, it is to be noted that a good many Communists and fellow travelers in Finland are undoubtedly opportunists: people who hope to become public officials when the Communists take over or who, believing the trend to be Communist, deem it prudent to avow a political creed in which they do not really believe. While everyone in Finland is too familiar with the Russians to be greatly deceived by anything they may do, it seems possible that a relaxation of Soviet pressure on Finland may result in defections among the opportunists in the pro-Communist camp.

The Soviets have not a great deal to show for their diplomatic bullying of Finland and for the pressure which they have exerted through planted items in Communist news organs. They did secure the Friendship Pact in 1948, but they did not take over Finland at that time as was almost undoubtedly their original intention, and they are today probably farther from taking over Finland than they have been at any time since 1944. On the other hand, their constant browbeating has made the Finns exceedingly careful in all of their relations with the West not to do anything which would suggest any understandings of a military or political nature. In other words, while the steadfast resistance of the non-Communist Finns to Soviet pressure may have been one element in the evident change in Soviet tactics, it seems unlikely that it is the principal element.

With regard to point (2), some of our contacts have suggested that the easing of Soviet pressure on Finland is a means of baiting the trap for the other Scandinavian countries. There is unquestionably a superficial attractiveness to the position of Finland, which is not feeling immediate Soviet pressure and is not being urged to make great sacrifices in order to build up its defense capabilities, by comparison with Norway, which has received a series of menacing Soviet notes and is being asked to make real sacrifices in order to fulfill its NATO commitments. It is scarcely to be doubted, however, that both the Norwegians and the Finns are quite familiar enough with the Russians not to be deceived by such a game. The Russian attitude may nevertheless be due to two other factors, (a) with their doctrinaire ideology they seem incapable of understanding the psychology of other peoples and (b) they would probably be right if they thought that a minority both in Finland and Norway would be deceived to a greater or lesser extent by appearances. It seems probable, therefore, that this is one of the motives behind the changing trend which the Legation has observed.

With regard to point (3), it is of course true that Finland has, since attaining independence, had a tendency to regard Germany

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as a diplomatic and military counterweight against Russia. Moreover, Germany is specifically mentioned in the Finno-Russian Friendship Pact. There may well be some connection therefore between the German question and the change in Soviet policy toward Finland. At the same time, even if one were to grant the supreme preoccupation of the Kremlin with the German question at the moment, it is still difficult to see how greater Soviet cordiality toward Finland would fit into the picture except in a minor way. We are therefore inclined to doubt that this is a major reason for the evident change in Soviet tactics.

With regard to the fourth point, there has unquestionably been a tendency in Finland, with the elimination of German military power, to turn to the Western powers and particularly to the United States as a counterforce which might enable the small Finnish nation to live on Russia's very doorstep.. However, the realization that there is nothing the Western powers could do to save Finland from being overrun by Soviet Russia if the latter is willing to run the risks involved in any military action in Europe is a vastly more important factor in Finnish policy making which sharply limits Finland's freedom of action. The Finnish government has therefore been most circumspect in its relations with Russia since 1944; and while the existence of revanchist sentiment is undoubtedly widespread in Finland, it is even more undoubtedly true that the vast majority of the Finnish people uphold the government's policy. There is little as yet to indicate that the Finns will pursue a bolder line toward Soviet Russia, even though they perceive a softening in Russian pressure. Their most fervent hope is to stay out of further trouble, and whereas they would defend their own courageously, they have no intention of seeking further adventures.

But for the Russians this does not greatly simplify matters. They are perfectly aware that the great majority of Finns hate them with ample good reason. They see the potential strength of the United States and of the other NATO powers being girded for possible battle. They see air bases under construction in Norway, practically in their front yard. Without wishing to discuss at length the global considerations behind Russian policy making, it can scarcely be doubted that the Kremlin has apprehensions regarding trends in this northern area.

As has already been pointed out, the Russians can scarcely hope to take over Finland through internal measures alone. It is of course conceivable that the whole purpose of the present trend of Russian tactics is to lull the Finns into a sense of false security and then to stage a sudden coup, as during the Olympic Games. Yet under present circumstances such a move could scarcely succeed unless the Finnish authorities were incredibly lacking in vigilance, and the cost of a failure would presumably be high. By the same token it would still be easy for the Soviets

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to overrun Finland militarily, but if the disadvantages and dangers of undertaking a military coup have heretofore been sufficient to deter them, it is clear that those disadvantages and dangers are greater today and increasing every moment. In other words, unless the Soviets have decided to precipitate a general preventive war, or at least to risk general war, they are hardly likely to march into Finland, assuming that the Finns seem prepared to continue to uphold the provisions of the Friendship Pact.

The Kremlin, then, is confronted with the need of living with an independent Finland in the dangerous years which presumably lie ahead. The fundamental question which the men in the Kremlin must have considered (in so far as Finland played any role in the global thinking of the men in the Kremlin) is how Russia's vital interests in Finland could best be preserved. In this regard, the point which presumably impressed them was that, although the previous policy had not been a failure, it had also not been a success. By constant bullying in 1940 the Russians forced the Finns into the arms of the Nazis in 1941, and the lesson may not have been lost on the Kremlin. In the event of a general conflagration a relatively cordial policy might well induce the Finns to remain neutral and be prepared to uphold the Friendship Pact; and this, after all, would be vastly better for Soviet Russia than to have to divert the troops and materials to destroy Finland's military force and to keep down Finland's guerilla resistance, to mention but two of the inconveniences the Soviets would face in that event. It is perhaps not without significance that for the first time the Soviets have just made quite a fuss over the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Friendship Pact. In other words, we believe that American rearmament, while not yet producing any substantial change in Finland's policy, is probably being reflected in the perceptible change in Soviet tactics toward Finland.

With regard to point (5), little more can be said than to state the proposition. The Soviets are always particularly vicious in regard to any manifestations of American influence, existing or alleged, in Finland and their venom is doubtless a reflection of their concern at the friendliness felt toward America in this sensitive area. It may not have been lost on the Russians that pressure on the Finns makes the latter look ever more wistfully across the Atlantic at the United States - and that pressure probably also plays a perceptible if modest role in the determination of the United States to be so strong that aggression everywhere will be discouraged.

The Legation appreciates that in the above discussion it has examined but one tessera in the world mosaic which must determine Soviet - and American - policy, and that in examining with a magnifying glass such a small part of the whole picture, the picture is distorted. The broad trend of Kremlin policy is presumably

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determined primarily by such fundamental considerations as Asia first versus Europe first, the German question and the significance of NATO activities. What happens in Finland in the immediate future is obviously of small moment to the Soviet Union by comparison with these major considerations. It is conceivable that what appears to be a change of tactics toward Finland is simply a manifestation that Soviet policy makers cannot at the moment be bothered with Finland.

Nevertheless the Legation hopes that the observations which it has made may be of some service to the Department. The Legation has the impression for example that this is by no means the only sector in which the Soviets have shown a tendency to be sweetly reasonable in recent months. The Legation also has noted indications that the Russians may be inclined to shift their pressure from Europe to Asia, feeling that the latter field at the moment offers greater potential rewards. The Department will doubtless be able to evaluate the true significance of what we have noted in this small corner of the world.

The Legation believes that [REDACTED] remark quoted above rather neatly summarizes the present reaction of Finnish policy makers toward the new trend in Soviet tactics. Having had to live on the Russian border for several hundred years, the Finns are not likely to think that one summer idyll lessens the Soviets' ultimate intention to swallow them. While the Finns are undoubtedly relieved at the momentary lull in Soviet menaces they realize that there are dangers for them even in the immediate situation. That any accretion to Western military strength is in the long term beneficial to Finland's security is clearly the fact, but the balance of power in Europe has not yet shifted enough to contribute materially to Finland's immediate security. Finland could in all probability be overrun by the Soviets as quickly today as it could have been two years ago. Thereafter, even if the West should eventually win a complete victory, any general war would still have been a disaster for Finland; Finland would be gutted as a nation and most of the leading people in Finland would undoubtedly have been liquidated. Moreover, during the transition period, while the West is building up its strength, the Finns are very apprehensive that the danger of war is actually increased. It is these considerations, we believe, which will make the Finns extremely circumspect in taking advantage of the lessened Soviet pressure on Finland. Both Paasikivi and Kekkonen will continue to insist on the benefits to Finland of a faithful observance of the Pact of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Aid. In sum, if a period of

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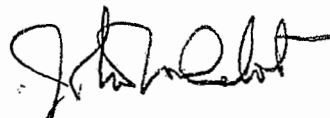
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urbanity on Soviet Russia's part is not going to induce the Finns to forget the many old scores, neither will it lead them to forget the terrible enduring menace that Russia must inevitably be on their eastern frontier.



John M. Cabot

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